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OBJECTIVE INFORMATION ON MILITARY MATTERS

Letter dated 25 April 1991 from the head of the Chinese delegation addressed to the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission

I have the honour to transmit to you a working paper entitled China's Basic Position on Objective Information on Military Matters. The Chinese text and its English translation are enclosed herewith.

I would be grateful if you could kindly arrange to have this text circulated as a working paper of the Disarmament Commission under item 4 on the agenda of this session.

(Signed) Hou Zhitong
Head of the Chinese delegation
to the 1991 session of
the Disarmament Commission

Annex

OBJECTIVE INFORMATION ON MILITARY MATTERS

China's basic position on objective information on military matters

Working paper submitted by China

I. Objective

The exchange, as appropriate, of objective information on military matters among States Members of the United Nations in the light of their specific circumstances is conducive to greater openness and transparency, enhanced mutual trust, and the relaxation of tensions, thus contributing to the promotion of disarmament and the strengthening of peace and security.

II. Principles

1. In order to promote the exchange of objective information on military matters and increase openness and transparency, States should strictly abide by the Charter of the United Nations and the Five Principles of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-agression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence, and oppose and eliminate the use or threat of use of force in international relations.

2. It is imperative that the exchange of objective information on military matters be based on the principle of undiminished security for all States.

3. As States vary in their military strength and policy, their impact on the security of other countries and regions is not the same. At the international level, States with the largest and most sophisticated nuclear and conventional arsenals and the military alliance have the obligation to take the lead in making public information concerning their military matters, and under the current circumstances should start with publicizing information on their offensive military forces, such as their long-range fighting capable naval and air forces. They should also enhance the sense of security of other countries and regions by halting their arms race and drastically reducing their armaments, thereby promoting international peace and security.

4. States can formulate through consultations at their own initiative practicable measures on the exchange of an openness and transparency in objective information on military matters in the light of their specific situations and political, military and security conditions. There is no universally applicable formula in this regard.

5. The exchange of and openness and transparency in objective information on military matters should be carried out in conjunction with the bilateral, subregional or regional and multilateral efforts in strengthening security, building confidence and disarmament.

III. Scope

1. The scope of the exchange of and openness and transparency in objective information on military matters should be defined in accordance with the above principles through consultations on an equal footing by parties concerned and can be adjusted, as necessary, upon their agreement.

2. States can, upon the establishment of basic political trust and normal State relations and in line with their own national and regional conditions and needs, formulate through consultations bilateral confidence-building measures in the military sphere, such as to refrain from any military exercise directed against each other along the border, limit the scale, frequency and geographical scope of military exercises at border areas, inform each other of the scale, frequency and geographical scope of military exercises and major troop movements in border areas, invite each other to observe military exercises, exchange annual plans on relevant military activities, agree upon areas free from military exercises. These measures may create conditions for possible further regional arrangements.

IV. Role of the United Nations

1. The United Nations may examine and formulate by consensus guidelines and recommendations concerning the exchange of and openness and transparency in objective information on military matters.

2. The United Nations, without prejudice to bilateral, subregional or regional, and multilateral efforts, may encourage and promote the exchange of and openness and transparency in objective information on military matters, including data collection and dissemination and provision of advisory services.

3. United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament may, with the support of States of the region, discuss and study the exchange of and openness and transparency in objective information on military matters, and explore specific measures suitable to their regional characteristics.